

Elizabeth Broun
The Margaret and Terry Stent Director

Elizabeth “Betsy” Broun is responsible for the nation’s premier collection of American art and major exhibition, research, publication, education and digital media programs. During Broun’s tenure, she has successfully completed ambitious fundraising campaigns to renovate and enhance the museum’s two National Historic Landmark buildings—the museum’s main building located in the heart of a revitalized downtown cultural district and the Renwick Gallery, located steps from the White House in the heart of historic federal Washington.

With Broun’s vision, the museum has become a leader in distance learning, Web-based resources, research databases and digital media. In addition, the museum has developed a significant national education program and innovative uses of technology in all aspects of the museum program.

Broun recently completed a fundraising campaign for the renovation of the Renwick Gallery, which reopened Nov. 13, 2015, following a comprehensive two-year renovation. The project includes completely renewed infrastructure, enhanced historic features and other upgrades to the building that make it a 21st-century destination attraction.

Broun conceived and secured funding for many of the museum’s core programs and new public spaces in its main building—a conservation center, an art storage and study center, an enclosed courtyard, an auditorium and an education center. The innovative Lunder Conservation Center is the first art conservation facility that allows the public permanent behind-the-scenes views of the preservation work of museums. The Luce Foundation Center for American Art is the only visible art storage and study center in Washington, with thousands of artworks on public display. The Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard is a public gathering space designed by the world-renowned architectural firm Foster + Partners. The Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, a 346-seat space, is the first such facility for the museum. The MacMillan Education Center is equipped with a state-of-the-art video conferencing system that allows for an expanded national and international distance-learning program.

Broun's research interests include contemporary art, 19th-century art, and prints and drawings. Her 1989 exhibition catalog on Albert Pinkham Ryder won the prestigious Alfred H. Barr Award for Distinguished Scholarship.

Broun came to Washington in 1983 as chief curator and assistant director of the museum, following seven years as a curator and interim director at the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas in Lawrence. She has served as director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and its branch museum, the Renwick Gallery, since August 1989.

Broun earned a doctorate degree (1976) in art history from the University of Kansas for her work on American art exhibited at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. She also holds a Certificate of Advanced Study from the University of Bordeaux in France.